

Article - Education

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§7–125.

(a) In this section, “unpaid meal debt” means debt owed to a school by a student for school meals or insufficient funds in the student’s meal account.

(b) A public school shall notify a parent or legal guardian of a student when there is a low balance in the student’s meal account and before the student accrues unpaid meal debt.

(c) A public school may not:

(1) Communicate about unpaid meal debt directly with a student or in a manner that humiliates, embarrasses, or stigmatizes the student; or

(2) In response to a student’s unpaid meal debt:

(i) Require the student to wear a wristband, hand stamp, sticker, or other identifying mark;

(ii) Require the student to complete chores or tasks;

(iii) Deny a meal to the student;

(iv) Dispose of a meal after it has been served to the student;

or

(v) Restrict a student from access to school records or participation in any school–related extracurricular activity.

(d) A public school may provide an alternative meal instead of a standard meal if the meal:

(1) Meets the nutritional standards of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and

(2) Is available to all students in the school, regardless of unpaid meal debt.

(e) (1) A public school shall ensure that a parent or legal guardian of each student is notified about the application process and eligibility requirements for the school's free or reduced price meal programs by providing:

(i) Assistance in understanding the application process and eligibility requirements; and

(ii) Printed applications in multiple languages.

(2) A public school shall allow a student to apply for the school's free or reduced price meal programs at any time during the year.

(3) If a student who qualifies for a free or reduced price meal program transfers to another school within the same jurisdiction, the new school shall enroll the student in the corresponding free or reduced price meal program.

(f) Each county board shall:

(1) Determine whether each public school in its jurisdiction is in compliance with the policies and standards of the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding communications about meal charge policies; and

(2) Report to the Department its findings each year.

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